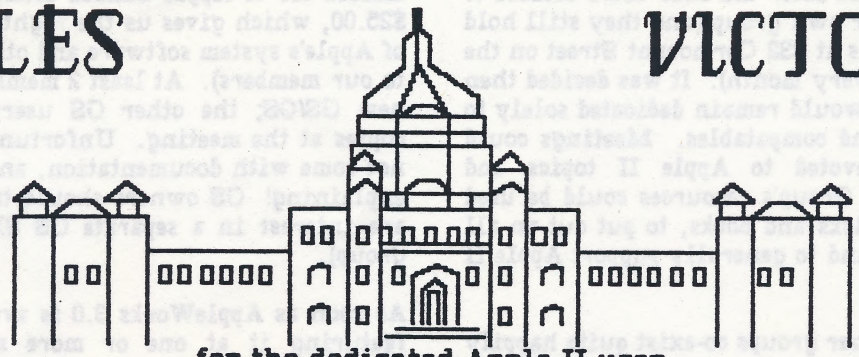
APPLES VICTORIA



Volume 10.89

OCTOBER 1989

for the dedicated Apple II user

1989 EXECUTIVE

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Treasurer:	Dave Barlow
Secretary:	Claudia Boorman
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NOTICE OF NEXT MEETING

DATE: Thursday, Oct. 5, 1989
TIME: 7:30 p.m. **sharp**
PLACE: Spencer Jr. Sec. School
Typing Room (main floor via west door)
1026 Goldstream Ave.

(Meetings are held the first Thursday of every month from September through to June.)

MEETING FORMAT:

- Group Business: New meeting location
- Questions & Answers/Open Discussion
- Main Theme: Applefest
- Special Interest Groups (SIGs)
- Coffee Break

NOTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER MEETING

Changes were certainly evident to those who attended our September meeting. Over the summer, Spencer School underwent a face lift. Most of the Apple IIs are gone along with the upstairs lab. They have been replaced by Mac +s in the newly renovated typing room wing on the main floor. We were able to use our new white notice board from Apple Canada to direct everyone to the new meeting location.

Bob opened the meeting by discussing these and upcoming changes to our Group. Our new executive is due to be elected this coming January, and at least the President and Vice President positions will be open as both Bob and John will not be running again for office. Please consider now nominating yourself or another member for any of the executive positions. The more nominations the better, as a little competition is healthy. We have no law saying that our Executives must be elected by acclamation!

With Spencer School now a Macintosh school, our Group must find a new meeting location by the end of the year, ideally one that has resident Apple II computers and comes rent free! Everyone is encouraged to actively search out schools, community centres or organizations for possible meeting sites. Norm even volunteered the use of his computers at meetings if no others were available. It was considered important by many of our members that there be an adequate number of computers for use at each meeting. Please let one of the Executive know if you can find us a suitable location.

"Why not allow Mac users into our Group?" was an important question put forward for discussion. When Apples Victoria was a new Group several years ago, Mac users as well as Apple II enthusiasts were

included. A short time later the Mac users decided to split off to form their own group (and they still hold meetings at George G's at 832 Cormorant Street on the second Thursday of every month). It was decided then that Apples Victoria would remain dedicated solely to Apple II computers and compatables. Meetings could then be entirely devoted to Apple II topics and products, and all the Group's resources could be used to acquire Apple II disks and books, to put out an all Apple II newsletter, and to generally support Apple II users.

On the other hand, other groups co-exist quite happily by holding special interest group (SIG) meetings for each family of computers as well as regular, general meetings where all are welcome. These clubs obviously require a greater number of volunteers, greater organization, more complex bookkeeping (who gets what part of the membership fee) and more accessible meeting location(s). Members who attend the general meetings would probably learn more about other types of computers and about computing in general.

The local MS-DOS group, Big Blue & Cousins, has been considering changing its name and allowing all types of computer users to join. However, no one had heard any news on whether this is being seriously considered or not.

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Richard L. Catinus

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Charles Smith put forwared a motion for the members to vote on keeping Apples Victoria an "Apple II only" club as opposed to an "AppleII/Mac" group. "Apple II only" won by a strong majority. We'll definitely have to move away from those Macs now! Anyone changing over to Macs can either join one of the existing Mac groups (we believe another Mac Group exists up at UVic and another professional users group can be contacted through Richard at Advantage), or they can start a new Mac group of their own.

Our Group continues to get lots of mail from Apple Canada including the recently arrived Apple notice board, newsletters, videos and 2 disks containing the latest GS operating system (GS/OS) for us to distribute to our members. (Secretary's note: The registration and licensing agreement between our Group and Apple Canada has now been signed and mailed off to Apple Canada along with a cheque for $25.00, which gives us the right to distribute copies of Apple's system software and other "developer tools" to our members). At least 2 members already had the new GS/OS; the other GS users were able to get copies at the meeting. Unfortunately, the disks did not come with documentation, and they do need some explaining! GS owners should talk to Norm if they are interest in a separate GS SIG (special interest group).

As soon as AppleWorks 3.0 is available, we plan on featuring it at one or more meetings. It is a significant upgrade from the last version of AppleWorks, but check out the added features first before deciding to upgrade. It won't be worth the money if you don't need the improvements. AppleWorks 3.0 will have a built-in spell checker, but all the other TimeOut add-ons will also have to be upgraded before they will work on this new version. If you have an old original TimeOut disk that you want upgraded, you can do it locally through Norm (see him for details).

DataBases Explained

Instead of the usual software demo, John Epp gave an informative talk on the basics of databases. Once the underlying concepts common to all database programs are understood, it is much easier to learn to use any particular one.

The word "database" is just a new way to describe a collection of data. "Data" is defined as the facts and figures from which information can be extracted. Databases existed long before computers, in the form of phonebooks, rolex cards, encyclopedias and even whole libraries. One of the first uses of mainframe computers was to store databases electronically, allowing easier, faster access to (and retrieval of) the data. Even today, with the tremendous advances in computer technology, mainframes continue to be used heavily for database management. As microcomputers become more powerful and as information networks expand and are linked to all parts of the world, individuals are now able to access a whole wealth of data that was unheard of even a decade ago. Now an individual can electronically collect, organize, sort, index, retrieve, or print his own databases with the help of database management software and his personal computer.

Knowing the correct terminology, or database "lingo" is half the battle. Using the analogy of a pile or "stack" of index cards, look first at only one card. On each card are headings such as "name", "address", "city" etc. Beside each heading is a space to enter and store the data. Each heading is the name given to each category or field. A card without any data entered is called a form or template; once the data has been entered each card represents a database record. The whole pile of cards containing similarly arranged data is called a database file.

The number of fields (or categories) in each record will vary from file to file, as will the number of records (or cards). Most database programs have limits on the number and lengths of the fields. The number of records usually depends on the total size of each record and the amount of memory you have available.

To use another analogy - the phonebook - consider each column heading (last name, first name, initial, address etc.) to be the field names. Each row or line displays all the data on any given phone subscriber and represents a record in the phonebook database. The entire book containing many pages, each containing many lines (records), represents one (large!) database file. If you're used to the rows and columns of spreadsheets, this analogy many help.

The usefulness and power of electronic databases become more evident when you first try to manually extract specific information from a phonebook or stack of cards. A phonebook is already sorted by last name, and within each last name, by first name and middle initial. Therefore it is fairly easy to find the phone number for someone named George E. Jones, as it will be listed in order with all the other Jones. However, suppose you found a piece of paper with a phone number written on it and you couldn't remember whose number it was. Short of actually phoning the number, trying to find it in the book would take forever! Think how much easier it would be if first you could rearrange the book in phone number order. An equally acceptable alternative would be to have a cross-reference index in phone number order which would give you the name to look up to retrieve the phone number. Your job would be equally time-consuming if you knew the address but not the name or the phone number. Electronic databases allow you to sort the data on any field (some do this more quickly than others) and to search for and find data that you need. Other database programs allow you to index a database in a variety of ways for easier access to data.

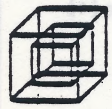
Database programs almost always include a Report Generator which allows you arrange your data in a variety of formats prior to printing. Our Group database, for instance, can be used to print mailing labels for our newsletters (labels being a type of report) or we can create lists of our members showing some or all of the information stored on each person. We can even query the database to display or print a list of only those members who have joined in the last year, or who own a GS, or who live outside Victoria, etc. The possibilities are enormous.

The Report Generators also allow you to create calculated fields which allow you to use arithmetic operators and functions to make calculations for your report. A common example takes the cost of a single item (stored in one field) and multiplies it by the cost of each item (stored in another field), displaying the result in a third, calculated field. The SUM function is very handy for totalling columns. Some programs allow you to group your data on a category of your choice and, if you wish, print subtotals for each category in your report.

When designing your own database files, you should first carefully plan what information you need to include, how you might need to sort the data, and how it might need to be displayed, before you define your fields. Databases are sorted starting with the left-most character in the chosen field. If you were to define a field called "name" and the entire name was entered in the field in natural order, you would get George E. Jones coming before Simon D. Adams when the records were sorted. Alternately, if the names were entered as Jones, George E., for instance, they would sort by last name correctly but you would be restricted in how you could display the names in reports and labels. The convention is to define at least two name fields so you can separately manipulate the first and last names. In general, if you need to sort by it or display it separately, put it in its own field.

A common mistake made by beginners is to create a field such as "Age" to record how old each person is. However, if you plan on using your database for more than one year, the data will need to be regularly updated. Try to avoid built-in obsolescence in the categories you choose. Instead of age, try using "Birthdate". Most databases have special ways of formatting and sorting dates chronologically, so it's doubly worthwhile to choose this method.

Before you can enter data you must first define your fields by giving each a name. Some database programs require you to define how many characters each field can contain, and often you can define the type of data allowed in that field. Some common field types are character (alphabetic), numeric, date, time, or logical (yes or no only). Some programs get fancy and have a larger selection of types to choose from including phone numbers, integers, floating point numbers, etc. These types are used to facilitate the data entry process. A date-type field will not let you enter a 13th month, for instance.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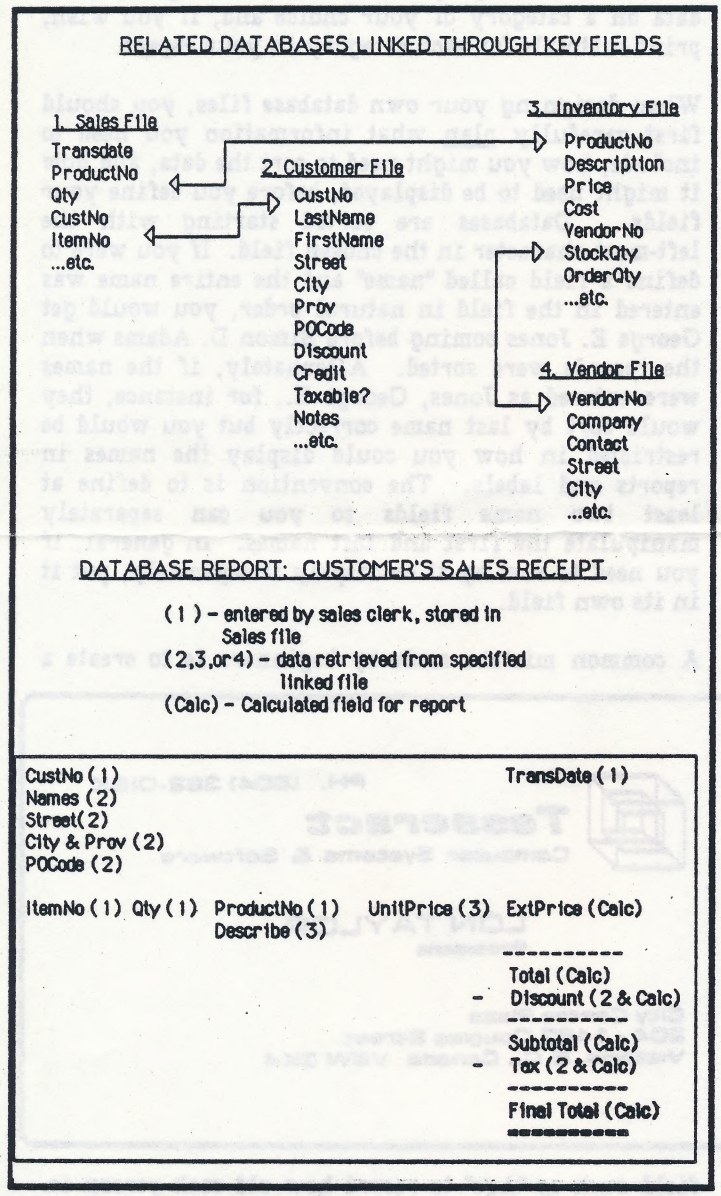

Some database programs make it very difficult or even impossible for you to add or change fields once the file structure has been established. Therefore, try adding a few extra "Misc" fields to your database when you first create it. You'll be surprised how often you need to use them later!

So far we have discussed only single or "flat" database systems where each file works independently of any other file (when working on your stamp collection file, there is no need to involve your address and phone file). For more complex situations such as those found in business, the power and flexibility of a relational database system is often required. Here, two or more files are created, designed to prevent information from being unnecessarily duplicated in several records of the same file. Files are linked together (related) through a common field. Once the system has been set up it is quite easy to use; the user simply fills in the blanks and answers on-screen questions. Customized database systems usually consist of several related databases surrounded by a program that creates the menus and controls the input.

Consider the following example of a retail store using a relational database system to print up their sales receipts and keep track of their inventory. This might include a "Customer" file containing information on all their customers including name, address and credit rating. They might also have a "Vendor" file to hold information on their suppliers, and a "Product" or "Parts" file for their merchandise. These types of files are often termed as permanent or dictionary files, as they contain fairly constant information and are used like a dictionary to look up data.

Other files that store data of a dated, or more temporary nature, are known as transient files. A file containing this month's sales transactions will be used to update the permanent inventory and customer (accounts receivable) files. The completed transactions will then be moved to a permanent, history file, leaving room for the coming month's sales transactions in the transient file.

Each record in the permanent files is usually unique; in the customer file each record is devoted to a separate customer. To ensure its uniqueness, each record (customer, vendor, product etc.) is usually assigned a unique identifying number for use in relating it to the other files. Therefore, when entering customer sales transactions, the sales clerk would first enter the customer number. Because this transaction file is linked by customer number to the customer file, all the customer information is instantly available without having to re-enter it every time that customer makes a purchase. Both of these files must contain a customer number field for the link to work. Refer to the nearby diagrams for a possible layout for such a system.

Many stores are now using a barcode reader, which scans the barcode on each item being purchased for the unique product number. This product number is internally linked to a product file containing a description, unit price, in stock quantity etc. Stock levels can be automatically updated, and purchase orders can be triggered when levels get too low.

Database programs are becoming more sophisticated all the time. The new HyperCard and HyperStudio programs (for the Mac and IIgs respectively) give a more intuitive, graphic look to a new kind of database program. The screen shows a card representing each record, and a collection of cards are called stacks rather than files. The power of these "hyper" programs lies in their amazing linking capacity. Areas on each card are defined as "buttons", and with a click of the mouse you are instantly linked to other cards, pictures, sounds or even video files (with the right hardware of course!). For more conventional databases try using AppleWorks or DBMaster.

MEMBERSHIP

A hearty welcome to our newest member

Rosemary Cross 384-2461

BULLETIN!!

Through the University of Victoria's speakers program we have arranged for Dr. Byron Ehle to address our December 7 meeting (whereever that may be) on the subject "Programming - is that all there is to Computer Science?". Everyone should be interested in this topic.

BITS 'N PIECES

Norm says that Beagle Bros are shipping TimeOut upgrades for AppleWorks 3.0. He hasn't received his yet, but anyone who wants to upgrade may call him Wednesday or Thursday to see if he will have them at the Thursday meeting.

He also said that GS/OS Version 5.0A is coming out to correct bugs in 5.0. Hyperstudio has not been received yet.

*****

The **Greater Victoria Public Library** can now be accessed via modem. The on-line catalogue operates in the same way that the terminals in the libraries do. You can get full details of author, title publisher, subject, number of copies and their location, etc. You can also find out if the book is out on loan and its due date.

The telephone number is 388-4944. Access is only possible during library operating hours as follows:

9 a.m. - 6 p.m. - Mon., Wed., Sat.
9 a.m. - 9 p.m. - Tues., Thur., Fri.
1 p.m. - 5 p.m. - Sunday (after Thanksgiving to Easter).

Modems should be set as follows:
Data bits - 7
Stop bit - 1
Parity - Odd
Duplex - Full/Host
Baud rate - 300/1200/2400
Keyboard - Upper or lower case

Further information is contained in a pamphlet obtainable at any branch. Operation is quite straight-forward. Some useful commands are: NEW USER, HELP, COMMAND HELP, ADVANCED HELP.

*****

Beagle Bros has announced the pricing of **StyleWare** products now released under their name. All programs have been updated and revised and are not copy-protected.

The IIe, IIc, and IIc+ programs are **BeagleWrite** (formerly MultiScribe) at US$79.95, **BeagleWrite Desk Accessories** at $39.95, **BeagleWrite Picture Manager** at $39.95, and **BeagleWrite Fontpaks Volumes 1 & 2** at $39.95 each.

IIgs products are **BeagleWrite GS** (MultiScribe GS) at US$99, **BeagleDraw** (formerly TopDraw) at $89.95, **Beagle Bros GS Desk Accessories** (formerly DeskWorks) at $59.95, **Beagle Bros Clip Art Volume 1** at $49.95, and **Beagle Bros Font Library Volume 1** at $49.95.

Beagle Bros also announced network, lab, site, and district licensing policies for their **TimeOut** series, and an upgraded **Point-to-Point**.

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APPLE CANADA NEWS

Apple Canada Inc. has announced that the Apple IIGS now comes with 1 megabyte (actually 1.125 MB) of RAM and 256K of ROM. With 1 MB, the computer will operate on the Appletalk network system and handle larger documents and more sophisticated applications without the need for added memory. Some of the features of the new System Software 5.0 have been included in the computer's ROM. The new Apple IIGS is completely compatible with hardware and software designed for previous Apple IIGS computers.

Specific slots must no longer be dedicated to specific uses, so there are effectively more slots available for custom configurations. New logic board design produces minor improvements to the computer's sound.

Other enhancements for people with disabilities allow them to manipulate the mouse and keyboard more easily. A new "sticky keys" feature enables users to activate several keys simultaneously with single keystrokes. Also the responsiveness of the mouse to very small movements can be increased and more functions can be controlled from the keyboard.

Suggested retail price of the Apple IIGS with keyboard, mouse, manuals, system software and guided tour remains $1695 (CDN).

BEWARE THE LODE RUNNER!

APPLES B.C. NEWS reports a new virus for the Apple II, virus number 3. Apparently it is not as destructive as previous ones (CyberAids and Festering Hate). Although not 100% positive, it appears that the program SPEEDY SMITH is the culprit, a recent import from France. It is one of the fastest copy programs for the IIgs. For further information, interested members are referred to pages 10 & 11 of the September, 1989, issue of Apples B.C. News, a copy of which is in our library.

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